



# The Cup of the New Covenant

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD  
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## Strangers No More!

by Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S.

As the “global village” is experienced by more and more people today, issues arising from the intermingling of cultures, religions, and languages come to the forefront of dialogue and debate. This presents a challenge to all of us and raises a myriad of questions which perhaps we have never faced before.

Migration has always been part of the human experience. People migrate for various motives, but one very common reason is to seek a better life, often to escape poverty. I witnessed many examples of this while living in Guatemala. Poor people would pull together their limited resources in order to make the risky and sometimes deadly attempt to cross the border into the United States. They were willing to risk

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Sudanese refugees: among the 20 million worldwide

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## “You Know How an Alien Feels”

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At the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall, many believed that the twenty-first century would be an era of more open borders. They know better now. The barrier fences around the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in North Africa are symptoms of a heightened mentality of security in Europe.

Compared to the formidable security enclosures of those two enclaves, the Iron Curtain of the former Eastern block is child’s play.

The walls have not stopped the stream of African refugees. They have chosen instead to make the

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perilous sea voyage to Sicily, Lampedusa, and the Canary Islands. These fences have caused death. The death toll taken by the sea goes beyond the statistics. European politicians speak of them as “economic refugees,” and with this negative criterion they think they have justice on their side.

### EXCLUDING THE ALIENS

Europe follows a policy that makes it difficult for refugees to exercise their guaranteed human right to asylum. To that end, laws are made more stringent, as recently happened in Switzerland. Democratic states have arrogated to themselves the freedom to jail immigrants prior to deporting them, and to build prisons for that purpose. Australia’s Christmas Island bears striking similarities to Guantánamo.

In Germany the number of those seeking asylum reaches a new low each year, because those applicants from so called “safe” countries of origin receive no right to remain. Which countries of origin are “safe” is determined by administrative decision and not infrequently out of political considerations. The German solution is a template for all of Europe.

The southern border of the United States presents a similar scenario. Each year tens of thousands of illegal immigrants from Latin America in search of a secure life cross the 3200 kilometer-long border with México. In 2005 alone, 472 died making the cross-

ing. Along with the Border Patrol agents, units of the National Guard are now on patrol to stem this immigration. President Bush is strengthening the border fence at the cost of \$1.2 billion, in order to “protect” the citizens of the United States.

ranking politicians do not shrink from using them. They overlook the fact that the affluence of the western world has been financed by the misery of people of the Third World.

But even deeper than the concern for material security is the fear of



These children in Bogotá are “internally displaced persons

### PROTECTING PROSPERITY

How are these aliens a threat? Where does the threat come from? The threat and the fear come from the potential loss of one’s own affluence. Ever new crises in the labor market reinforce this fear: “They are taking our jobs!” or “They’re living at our expense!” – so go the platitudes in Europe and in the United States. Even high-

foreigners, the “others.” Studies suggest that nationalistic and racist parties derive their popularity above all from this fear of foreigners, a fear that is often systematically aroused.

Measures to promote integration undertaken by governments to counteract this are expensive and hardly bring in votes. The churches also, at least those in Europe, have

«In migrants the Church has always contemplated the image of Christ who said, “I was a stranger and you made me welcome” (Mt 25:35). Their condition is, therefore, a challenge to the faith and love of believers, who are called on to heal the evils caused by migration and discover the plan God pursues through it even when caused by obvious injustices.»

*Erga migrantes caritas Christi*, 12

(Instruction of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, May 2004)

not promoted educational programs that help integrate foreigners.

The consequences of failed attempts at integration are apparent: uprisings in the suburbs of Paris that go on for a week, the building of ghettos, and a rise in the crime rate. It is a vicious circle.

## MIGRATION AS A HISTORICAL PHENOMENON

There have been immigrants ever since human beings made the transition from a nomadic to a settled life. Abraham was an immigrant as were Joseph and his family in Egypt. The ancestors of Israel were immigrants in the promised land. All of the people of the industrialized west have their roots in movements of immigration. And it was always situations of need – caused by natural disasters, crop failures, climate change, overpopulation, or external pressure – that were the causes for people to migrate and to leave their homeland.

The extent of migration is new: 8.5 million people, according to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, had left their homeland in 2005, fleeing from environmental disasters, wars, persecution, and human rights violations. Added to this figure are 6.6 million *internal* refugees or “displaced persons,” 75 per cent of whom are women and children.

The motivating role of the media is new. Every day people in less economically developed countries see the media-enhanced affluence of a supposedly carefree western world projected into their poor dwellings by satellite and the World Wide Web. Who can take offence, then, at young people without prospects who set off with the dream of a better life? Who can think ill of families when they pool their savings so that one of them can leave in order

to earn money to insure the survival of the family back home?

In Senegal alone there are 100,000 people waiting for a chance to get to the Canary Islands and Europe, according to estimates of the Red Cross. In Latin America the pressure for emigrating is probably stronger. Experts in this area are predicting that the security walls of the industrial nations will be breached in the foreseeable future.

## GOD'S COMPASSION FOR THE ALIEN

It is not difficult to recognize God's option for the stranger or alien in the Deuteronomist's history in the Bible: “Yahweh loves the stranger” (Deut 10, 18). The commandment to love the alien (Deut 10, 18-19; Lev 19, 34) is rooted in the experience of Israel.

Jesus also stands squarely in this tradition. Jesus empties himself of his divinity (cf. Phil 2, 6-8) – this is the message of the incarnation. He

makes himself the least, the slave, of humanity; he makes himself like the immigrants (cf. Matt 25, 35). Thus God lives in solidarity, in a solidarity beyond our capacity, which makes possible salvation, freedom, peace, the knowledge that we are God's children, and that makes us fellow citizens and sharers in the household of God (cf. Eph 2, 19).

Jesus sheds his blood, excluded like a foreigner outside the gate (cf. Heb 13, 12), in order to save his people, to reconcile “those who are far off” and “those who are near” (Eph 2, 17), to build peace (Col 1, 20). The goal is a new, divine globalization: People of all peoples and nations, from all races and languages, who belong to God.

## MIGRATION, A SIGN OF THE TIMES

The Second Vatican Council called on church to recognize the signs of the times – the epochal changes in the world and in society – in order to

## DID YOU KNOW?

There are more than 20 million refugees, internally displaced persons, and persons without state in the world today.

The five countries in the world hosting the largest number of refugees are Pakistan, Iran, Germany, Tanzania, and the United States.

The five countries hosting the largest populations of concern (including refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless persons, and others) are Colombia, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan, and Afghanistan. (Colombia alone has more than 2 million internally displaced persons.)

These statistics from 2005 are taken from the web site of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. For more information, visit their site at [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org).

understand what God is saying to us today (*Gaudium et spes*, 4). We Missionaries also seek to do this in the light of our spirituality. What does God expect of us in the face of this global movement of migration?

First of all God expects us to be people of empathy: “You know how an alien feels, for you yourselves were once aliens in Egypt!” (Ex 23, 9). Empathy means more than mere sympathy. Empathy means that I can feel what the alien feels, because I myself have experienced something similar. Only empathy can develop into genuine, active solidarity.

Israel understood God’s question out of its collective memory of slavery in Egypt. Those of us formed by an individualist way of thinking have difficulty with this perspective. In order that this word of Yahweh does not sink to the level of a hollow phrase, one must take the challenge literally: Do I really know how an alien feels?

### OUR CHALLENGE

If not, then here is challenge for us, Missionaries of the Precious Blood: to create spaces where we can experience other cultures, mentalities, and life situations as

strangers or aliens. Formation offers possibilities for a stronger international collaboration or the foundation of missions in foreign cultural environments.

God loves the alien, and Jesus Christ has taken on himself the condition of being an alien. He shed his blood so that those who have no civil rights might become fellow citizens and members of God’s household. That is the message of salvation in the blood of Christ that we proclaim. Spiritualizing the message into something ideal and otherworldly is out of the question, for the kingdom of God is already in our midst (Lk 17, 21).

The kingdom lives wherever we live it. From that kingdom we must reach out so that the illegal immigrants, undocumented aliens, or those denied asylum, can hear this message in Europe or in the USA. They will ask us: What are you doing to make this dream a reality? Then we are asked to make a decision.

These decisions will take into consideration the concrete individual case. They will possibly bring us into conflict with our community or even with the surrounding church. Certainly we must take a stand on the current status of the

law. We will argue with the guardians of the law in order to be advocates for the alien.

We may need to decide to network with various lay groups – of every shade and color – who are engaged in working with refugees and integration.

Negotiation and reconciliation among cultures will become a priority of our pastoral work in different places.

Quite possibly we are faced with the decision to open our houses. That can become very uncomfortable, even illegal, if it is a question of giving asylum to illegal aliens.

Our confreres in Tanzania face very different challenges. There more than 400,000 refugees, largely forgotten by aid organizations, live in camps. In the case of some countries in Latin America, internal refugees in the hundreds of thousands flock to the megacities, because it is no longer possible to live on the land. These situations deserve further elaboration, but that is beyond my competence.

Wherever we are called, we must take up God’s request. God has showed us the divine option. God loves the stranger, the alien. ♦



Many immigrants risk dangerous voyages on the sea

# A Community of Immigrants: St. Agnes Parish, Los Angeles

**A**s Missionaries of the Precious Blood we are called to reach out to the marginalized, people living on the edge of society. In many parts of the world, the marginalized are immigrants. For the past sixteen years I have worked in a densely populated immigrant community in south-central Los Angeles, California. The majority of these immigrants are Hispanics from Mexico and Central America. Most are Catholic. They have come to Los Angeles seeking a better life for themselves and their families.

Often their journey here was filled with dangers. Once here jobs can be hard to find, since they have no official papers and very little education. Employers take advantage of them by paying sub-standard wages, with no benefits and often-

by William Delaney, C.P.P.S.

the rent, purchase food and clothing for their families. When parents are working long hours, their children, especially pre-adolescents, are prime candidates for gangs. These youngsters then begin to experiment with drugs, alcohol, premarital sex and various types of criminal activities. At the same time they lose their interest in education due to the gang leaders' influence.

## A WELCOMING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

At some point these immigrant families come to the church, some seeking a baptism, others to register their children for first communion classes or to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe or

to know the talents they have so they can share them with the whole community. The majority of our catechists, lectors, Eucharistic ministers, ushers, choir members, prayer group members and social justice workers are immigrants. Their talents continue to energize our parish community.

## CAMPAIGN FOR ADEQUATE HOUSING

This past November elections were held throughout the state of California and in many other states in the United States. Here in the City of Los Angeles there was a housing bond issue on the ballot. The city would buy a billion dollars of bonds over a ten-year period. Each year one hundred million dollars would be used to construct housing for low-income families. This would be of great help to immigrant families.

St. Agnes is part of a community organizing collective known as One L.A.-I.A.F. As a collective we were very interested in working to see this bond issue pass. At an initial meeting of St. Agnes parishioners in late September, over seventy people showed up to form a strategy to pass the bond issue. People from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Belize, and the Philippines, as well as a few born here in the U.S. participated. They included men and women, young adults, middle-aged and old people. The majority were Spanish-speaking but a few spoke only English.

Two young women who were bilingual chaired the meeting. People shared stories in small groups about the desperate need

«Migration brings together the manifold components of the human family and thus leads to the construction of an ever vaster and more varied society, almost a prolongation of that meeting of peoples and ethnic groups that, through the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, became ecclesial fraternity.»

*Erga migrantes*, 12

(Instruction of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, May 2004)

times not providing safe working conditions. If they complain about any of these conditions, they lose their jobs or are turned in to the immigration department to be deported.

These immigrants often live in over-crowded houses. Two families, who are unrelated, are often forced to share the same apartment. Parents work two or three jobs in order to get sufficient money to pay

some other feast. These occasions are opportunities for us to welcome them to the local Christian community. We want them to know that they do not need documents from any governmental agency to be welcomed here. By their baptism they are our brothers and sisters. As a result we invite them to be part of a relational community.

As people redeemed by the Blood of Christ they have value. We want



Members of the Precious Blood Prayer Group of St. Agnes Parish

for more housing. We decided to visit the homes of voters on the two Saturdays before the election to encourage them to vote in favor of the bond issue. This we did.

Some who walked were documented, others were undocumented. Nearly all were immigrants. On Election Day the bond issue received a 62% favorable vote. Unfortunately, to be enacted into law it needed 67% of the vote since it was a tax issue. However in the areas where we walked, 83% voted in favor of it. Hopefully, in future elections another 5% will vote in favor of it. This was an energizing activity for the immigrant community here. They could see an issue that would benefit them. They participated in the pre-election process even though on Election Day they would not vote.

### A GLIMPSE OF GOD'S REIGN

In the book of Daniel we read: "I saw one like the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven; when he reached the Ancient One and was presented before him, He received dominion, glory and kingship. Nations and peoples of every language serve him" (Dn 7, 13-14). To walk with and minister to immigrants gives us a foretaste of what will come. It also opens us up to

new and exciting ways of proclaiming the Good News.

In many ways the church in Latin America integrated the teachings of Vatican II in more dynamic ways than the church in the U.S., especially in the areas of catechesis and evangelization. Immigrants have brought that integration and vitality to the church of St. Agnes in Los Angeles. For this reason I view immigrants not as a problem to be solved but as a blessing to be celebrated. ♦

### XIX GENERAL ASSEMBLY MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

*"Leadership for the CPPS, 2007-2013"*

Rome - Collegio Preziosissimo Sanguine  
July 16-27, 2007

*Your prayers for the General Assembly are appreciated.*

# RWANDA, NEVER AGAIN?

When I was invited to work in ministry to Rwandan refugees in 1994, I was really shocked and amazed, but I felt that I was being called to join this mission as St. Gaspar did when he went to Sonnino, so I put myself at the foot of the crucifix and felt its power come upon me. My parents blessed me and thus I started the journey to the Ngara district in the region of Kagera where refugees were put into camps.

My first experience in the Benaco refugee camp was both astonishing and very sad. I saw a megacity of tents, huts made of grass, and a mass of people larger than I had ever seen in my life.

The whole area was covered by smoke during the preparation of food because they used firewood. The camp was crowded and noisy. There was an unpleasant odor, the result of the unplanned pit toilets and poor sanitation. While preparing food we could hardly breathe for the smoke and the smell.

Although they were living in a degrading situation, I noticed the prayerful life and charming liturgies of the refugees. They had welcoming smiles and enjoyed sharing the little they had. They were loving people. Furthermore, the Tutsi and the Hutu have the lovely tradition of greeting each other by hugging and kissing. These were new experiences for me.

## RWANDA: THE BACKGROUND

A little background on the refugees is helpful. Rwanda, a country of Central Africa, has a population of 8 million people. There are two major ethnic groups, the Hutu, who

by Benedict Shango Magabe, C.P.P.S.

make up 80% of the population, and the Tutsi, with 10%.

The Tutsi, favored by the Belgian colonists, controlled the country, but after independence in 1959 the Hutu overthrew the Tutsis. The favoritism was part of a “divide and rule” policy designed to make governing the colony easier.



A refugee camp in Darfur

The Tutsi had more privileges, were better educated, and were the leaders of the country, while the Hutus were left with fewer options. Suspicion grew between these two ethnic groups. This situation continued to boil until the Hutus were able to turn the tables on the Tutsi.

In 1994 the president of Rwanda together with president of Burundi were killed in a plane crash under suspicious circumstances. This rekindled the fratricidal war. The Hutu extremists took over the power since there was no president. The ensuing war lasted for more than three months and the death toll of Tutsi and moderate Hutu reached one million persons.

## LIFE SITUATION OF THE REFUGEES

I worked under the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) relief for an agency known as CARE International at the central warehouse as logistic assistant. We were responsible for issuing commodities to the agencies who served the refugees.

International aid agencies provided social services such as education, food, medical care, water, and even sports activities. The UNHCR coordinated the whole relief efforts of the refugees.

Despite the efforts of the aid organizations, the refugees suffered from malnutrition, constipation due to the change in diet, and an inadequate food supply. The loss of relatives and parents as well as of children left many refugees crying endlessly. Poor sanitation led to diseases such as malaria and cholera that killed many of the young. The emergence of prostitution had a sad impact on the camps, as many young people contracted HIV.

The life of the refugees was not secure. Robbery at gunpoint was rampant because there was an uncontrolled infiltration of ammunition from Rwanda. At the same time there was a significant rise in religious practice. Many people prayed and many liturgies were conducted.

### LAW AND ORDER

The government of Tanzania kept her borders open despite all difficulties posed by the influx of thousands of refugees. Police protection was inadequate at first, but improved later.

Sometimes the refugees were threatened, attacked, and even killed for being suspected spies for the Rwandan Patriotic Front or for wanting to return to Rwanda. On June 8, 1994, I witnessed a violent crowd chasing a man, a suspected spy. They killed him on the spot. On one day in August 1994, more than 15 refugees were killed in Benaco Camp simply because they were returning to Rwanda. Because of the threat of death, staff from agencies working at Benaco were evacuated to a distance of more than 20 kilometers.

### NEVER AGAIN!

It was very sad to see innocent people suffering. Most of them were women, children, and the elderly.

Even some Christians forgot the commandment of love, forgot about the fifth commandment of God – “You shall not kill!” – and took power into their hands and began killing their fellow brothers and sisters! For a Tutsi, a Hutu was an enemy to be killed and vice versa. Having a long nose or a short one was not an advantage but the gateway to the next life. One was killed only because of his or her physical characteristics!

Western countries were also partly responsible for the situation. The

colonialists worsened the situation by using their divide and rule policy. After creating a political imbalance, western countries sold their sophisticated guns and bombs to the now unstable third world countries.

Since the genocide in Germany in which millions of the Jews lost their lives, the international community said “never again!” But the genocide continues.

Besides the genocide in Rwanda, in Sudan more than three million innocent people have lost their lives and homes. The Lord’s Resistance Army has ravaged Northern Uganda. We know also of the terrible violence that has taken place in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in Sierra Leone, Iraq, and in Afghanistan.

“Never again!” Yet what was the international community doing in the face of this slaughter? Was not the UN Security Council aware of the killing of the innocent taking place in Rwanda? And what was the position of the church in all this? It is sad to know that in November 2006 even a priest has been convicted of involvement in the genocide!

### A CHRISTIAN’S RESPONSE

God’s word calls us to love our enemies and to forgive seventy times seven times. People can live together and forget their man-made differences. They can cultivate the practice of reconciliation. Certainly this is at the heart of the spirituality of the Blood of Christ.

My work with the refugees from Rwanda has challenged me to recognize the importance of our Precious Blood spirituality which proclaims that Jesus, through the shedding of his blood, has brought near “those who were far off” (Eph 2, 13). I am reminded of St. Gaspar, who confronted the violence of both the banditti as well as of the pope’s own troops in Sonnino and surrounding towns, seeking forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing.

Like Gaspar, we too must dare to preach and to live the good news that in Christ all are redeemed and all are reconciled by his blood. Like Gaspar, we too must go to the foot of the cross, a symbol of cruelty and violence, and also learn its message of forgiveness and reconciliation. ♦

### NEW PUBLICATIONS

*Fifty Days of Hope: Reflections for New Catholics*, by Dennis Chriszt, C.P.P.S. (Chicago, Illinois: J. S. Paluch, 2006).

*Pick Up Stuff: Family Farm Life*, by Ernie Ranly, C.P.P.S. (Carthage, Ohio: The Messenger Press, 2006).

*Testi sul Sangue di Cristo negli Scritti di San Gaspare Del Bufalo (Texts on the Blood of Christ in the Writings of Saint Gaspar Del Bufalo)*, edited by Beniamino Conti, C.P.P.S. (Volume 18 of the series “Sangue e Vita,” Rome, 2006).

**If you are interested in these publications, please contact the Generalate.**

# DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME

The kingdom of God established by Jesus comes to human beings as liberation from suffering. This is the clear message of the beatitudes. Those who live in desperate circumstances because of poverty, hunger, or suffering are the ones, Jesus says, that are of the kingdom of God. Jesus inaugurates the kingdom of his Father in defense of life. For him the kingdom implies and even demands interest in the human person, in his/her health, dignity, and in the totality of life.

In 2001 a law governing aliens went into effect. Far from seeking to integrate foreigners, the law condemned hundreds of thousands of people to a legal death, denying them residence permits and work even if they had been offered employment. This law prevented them from forming associations, from demonstrating, or forming unions.

## A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY RESPONDS

This was the sad situation of many of our brothers and sisters, living poorly in an underground economy without being able to provide for their basic necessities of life, uprooted from their culture and religion, that sparked our indignation. Because of our conviction and believing that we were being called by the God of history, on February 19, 2001, the Christian community of Precious Blood Parish of the neighborhood of Orcasitas in Madrid decided to take a stand against this law.

As a community we saw the abandonment and defenselessness in which these foreigners were living and this brought us to a process of

by Eugenio Mora Prior, C.P.P.S.

discernment on how we might be in active solidarity with undocumented immigrants and support their claims for justice. Thus we decided to create a safe place, an *encierro*, in the parish buildings, inviting the immigrants to come together to raise our social awareness, to bring pressure to bear, and to fight for their dignity.

Thus began our adventure with our brother and sister immigrants. In a short time the parish was transformed into a multicultural home in which men and women of different nationalities (Colombians,

joined us to work together in this initiative, even if they were not people of faith. Non-religious NGOs (non-governmental organizations), basic Christian communities and priests from other parishes also joined in.

Our struggle was shared with three other *encierros* in the city of Madrid and many others throughout Spain. These safe places together with the NGOs led the way to the negotiating table with the government of that time, with mediation by the public defender.

The results were very positive. After five months of asserting our

«The “foreigner” is God’s messenger who surprises us and interrupts the regularity and logic of daily life, bringing near those who are far away. In “foreigners” the Church sees Christ who “pitches His tent among us” (cf. *Jn* 1:14) and who “knocks at our door” (cf. *Ap* 3:20). This meeting – characterized by attention, welcome, sharing and solidarity, by the protection of the rights of migrants and of commitment to evangelize – reveals the constant solicitude of the Church, which discovers authentic values in migrants and considers them a great human resource.

*Erga migrantes*, 101

(Instruction of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, May 2004)

Ecuadorians, Romanians, Brazilians, etc.) were living together. The premises became dormitories at night. During the day the catechesis took place in parish meetings, informal discussions, and in sharing food together – all aimed at describing the plight of the immigrants and information on the law governing aliens.

## A SHARED STRUGGLE

It was not long before those who lived near our neighborhood

claims and negotiations there was a regularization of the status of more than 300,000 immigrants. This experience was for our Christian community a way of living our collaboration with the kingdom inaugurated by Jesus.

At the present time and in the light of what we lived at that moment, we are very happy because many of these immigrants are now friends of our community. They come to the Eucharist on Sundays, eat with us in our homes, invite us

to family events, and share our journey.

### THE "STRANGERS" REVEAL GOD'S PRESENCE

This is how we experience God's presence in our midst:

- Fernando, the Brazilian, married a Spanish woman. He invited us to the wedding and we were the family who accompanied him on that day. "How happy I am that you are here!" he said when he presented us to the others invited to the celebration. Again and again he expressed his gratitude for those who shared those special experiences with him during the period of the *encierro*.
- Elvis, our Colombian friend, is married to a Spanish woman, has a son whom he named Jairo. His birth was a blessing celebrated by us all.
- The arrival of the wives and children of some of the immigrants to live among us means an opportunity to be able to accompany them in the process of integration. We remember that God is the One who accompanies us.
- Some of these immigrants gained employment thanks to the sup-

«In migration faith discovers once more the universal message of the prophets, who denounce discrimination, oppression, deportation, dispersion and persecution as contrary to God's plan. At the same time they proclaim salvation for all, witnessing even in the chaotic events and contradictions of human history, that God continues to work out his plan of salvation until all things are brought together in Christ (cf. Eph 1:10).»

*Erga migrantes*, 13  
(Instruction of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, May 2004)

port they received from certain people in our community. This reminds us of the life of the first Christian communities described in the Acts of the Apostles.

- All of this has moved us to grow in a sense of shared responsibility to live as a community, to work pastorally, and to take care of one another. The immigrants have helped us to exercise our communion of life, of goods, and of action.

### A CALL TO PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS

These facts of life were and are for us a permanent call to proclaim the gospel as a force for renewal that

calls every human being to the fountain of life and of love. It is a invitation to discipleship and to discover that we cannot proclaim our faith if we do not confront the inequalities suffered by people in our society.

Precisely in this broken society faith must declare itself not just as an attitude of resignation and of consolation in the face of what is unacceptable, but as a call to hold fast to hope, to courage, and to initiative. It is a call that demands that we live in solidarity with men and women without any distinction, to recognize the inalienable worth of every human being, and to recognize God who is calling to us through our neighbor. ♦



Members of the Orcasitas community protest restrictive immigration laws

# Saint Gaspar, Exile

by Jerome Stack, C.P.P.S.

Many of our readers are familiar with the life of our founder, St. Gaspar, and with his four years in exile during the time of the Napoleonic occupation of the Papal States. We know that those were crucial years for Gaspar because it was during that time that he became closely associated with don Francesco Albertini, who became his spiritual director. It was Albertini who shared his zealous devotion to the Precious Blood with Gaspar and fanned the flames of that spirituality in his young protégé.

In this era in which we hear of the plight of refugees and immigrants – all exiles of a sort – on a daily basis, I have begun to ask myself



Gaspar stayed with the Oratorians in Bologna during part of his exile

how Gaspar's experience of being an exile himself might have influenced his spirituality and later min-

istry. Apart from the considerable influence of Albertini, how did Gaspar's experience of those four years in exile, separated from family and friends and from the ministries he so loved, shape his spiritual life? In particular, how did exile mold his particular vision of the mystery of the Blood of Christ?

## GASPAR IN EXILE

In June of 1810 the young Gaspar Del Bufalo, just twenty-four years of age and ordained not quite two years, refused to swear an oath of allegiance to Napoleon, who had invaded and now controlled the Papal States. Along with many other clerics he was sent into exile, first to Piacenza, then to Bologna, Imola, and Lugo.

During the first part of his exile it seems that he lived more or less under a state of "house arrest." Later, however, he and others were transferred to prisons under conditions that became increasingly severe. Eventually he was slated for deportation to Corsica, but was pardoned and returned to Rome in 1814.

The exile was an extreme hardship for Gaspar. There was, at least in the period when Gaspar was imprisoned in Imola and Lugo, genuine physical suffering because of the poor living conditions, bad food, and there were restrictions on the ability to celebrate Mass. Even when the circumstances were better, Gaspar experienced the pain of separation from family and friends acutely. Taking leave from his mother when he left Rome was particularly wrenching for him. He became sick to the point of death in Piacenza, the first stop on his journey of exile, possibly due to the stress of coping with being in exile.

## A Chronology St. Gaspar's Years in Exile

- 1809 Napoleon suppresses the Papal States. Pope Pius VII is forced into exile.
- 1810 The French government in Rome requires an oath of fidelity to Napoleon from all cardinals, prelates, pastors, canons. In June, Gaspar refuses to take the oath and in July is sent into exile to Piacenza.
- 1811 Gaspar is able to minister in Bologna. His mother dies in October.
- 1812 Gaspar again refuses to take the oath and is locked up in the prison of San Giovanni in Monte, Bologna.
- 1813 Gaspar is transferred to the prison or Rocca in Imola. He refuses to take the oath yet another time and is sent to the Rocca in Lugo. He is then transferred to Bologna and, rejecting the oath again, is condemned to Corsica. He awaits deportation in Florence
- 1814 Gioacchino Murat enters Rome in January, restoring freedom to those who had refused the oath. Gaspar returns to Rome in February. The Pope returns in May.

«In the foreigner a Christian sees not simply a neighbor, but the face of Christ Himself, who was born in a manger and fled into Egypt, where he was a foreigner, summing up and repeating in His own life the basic experience of His people (cf. *Mt* 2:13ff). Born away from home and coming from another land (cf. *Lk* 2:4-7), “he came to dwell among us” (cf. *Jn* 1:11,14) and spent His public life on the move, going through towns and villages (cf. *Lk* 13:22; *Mt* 9:35).»

*Erga migrantes*, 15

(Instruction of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, May 2004)

Gaspar faced many of the same challenges during those years of exile that any foreigner feels in a strange land. He was in a sense an alien experiencing a different culture, even though he was still in Italy. He was bereft of the social supports he had back in Rome: during one period he notes that he is the only Roman in his section of the prison. He even complained about the food, an important component of the Roman culture he obviously missed. His imprisonment was a challenge to his identity as a priest faithful to God and to the pope.

The exile was a bitter experience, even if it was one that was formative. It is interesting that I found practically no references to the years of exile in his later letters. While this is disappointing, it is not terribly surprising, since many people who experience the trauma of forced exile choose not to speak about these matters afterwards.

## THE EXILE AND GASPAR'S MINISTRY

If we look at the ministry of Gaspar, I believe that we can find evidence of the exile on the shape of his apostolic life. He may not have become a crusader for social justice, but he did reveal a strong solidarity with and compassion for those who found themselves to be exiles in various situations.

Gaspar continued to have a great love for the poor, as evidenced by numerous references in his letters to the work of the Santa Galla Hospice and to the ministry to the poor of the Piazza Montanara, especially in the letters written from exile. These apostolates served people who were truly exiles, “internal immigrants” from the country, who came to Rome out of economic necessity. No doubt he became even more sensitive to the plight of the homeless, the poor, and the sick during his own years as an exile.

Gaspar's work with the brigands in the area south of Rome is perhaps the most outstanding case in which Gaspar reached out to marginalized people. These bandits were certain-

ly living the lives of exiles – feared by the local populace and themselves fearing the fierce punishment threatened by the troops of the Papal States who were out to exterminate them.

Gaspar and the other early Missionaries chose to minister to them, not from the safety of a house in the village of Sonnino, but outside the town, a gesture of solidarity with people who were living on the margins of society. Gaspar's solidarity with and compassion for these brigands, who had committed some fairly horrible crimes, stands in sharp contrast to the vindictive attitude on the part of the papal government of the day.

Gaspar knew what it was like to be marginalized, to be a stranger, to be on the receiving end of a harsh legal system. He sought to have those people who were “far off” to be “brought near” (cf. *Eph.* 2, 13) through a loving and caring ministry.

The final chapter of Gaspar's life, in the second half of the year 1837, was also marked by his heroic solidarity with the victims of cholera in Rome. He returned to his beloved city from the relative safety of Albano, despite the fact that

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he himself had been in ill health, to be with those who were sick and dying, and with those who were coping with loss. Sickness, especially serious illness like cholera, has rightly been called a kind of exile, and Gaspar was determined to be in solidarity with those experiencing the “exile” of the plague.

### **GASPAR’S LEGACY FOR THE THIRD MILLENNIUM**

What would Gaspar do today? It’s always tricky to answer such a question, but one can only imagine that Gaspar, the exile, would challenge us in word and in action to be in solidarity with those who are immigrants, strangers, or exiles, with those who are “far off” and yet “near” in the Blood of Christ. For our founder, Jesus’ words in Matthew 25, 35, would have a special resonance: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

«Welcoming the stranger, a characteristic of the early Church, thus remains a permanent feature of the Church of God. It is practically marked by the vocation to be in exile, in diaspora, dispersed among cultures and ethnic groups without ever identifying itself completely with any of these. Otherwise it would cease to be the first-fruit and sign, the leaven and prophecy of the universal Kingdom and community that welcomes every human being without preference for persons or peoples. Welcoming the stranger is thus intrinsic to the nature of the Church itself and bears witness to its fidelity to the gospel.»

*Erga migrantes*, 22  
(Instruction of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, May 2004)

Were Gaspar a C.P.P.S. Missionary of the first years of the twenty-first century, I know he would seek out those who find themselves on the margins, to minister to them not only as an act of charity but of *justice*, because the Blood of Jesus calls us to collaborate in the min-

istry of redeeming and liberating men and women from the unjust and sinful structures and systems that oppress them.

Echoing the words of Exodus 23, 9, I can hear Gaspar saying to us: “I know how the alien, the exile, feels, for I too was an exile!” ♦



St. Gaspar spent several months in the Rocca of Imola while in exile

Continued from front page

everything in the hope of achieving a better way of life. They planned to send money back to support their families once they found a job.

A second common reason for migration is to flee oppression or war. While I was living in Chile under the military dictatorship of the late General Augusto Pinochet, I saw many people flee the country to save their lives or to avoid incarceration and torture because of differing political views.

There can be many reasons for migration, but what is certain is that it is a growing reality which now affects all of us. In this issue of *The Cup* we invite our readers to reflect on immigration, as persons committed to living under the inspiration of the Precious Blood of Christ.

We read in the working document issued in preparation for the World Congress of Religious which reflected on the future course of religious life (Rome, 2004): “In consecrated life we also experience the mobility characteristic of the times. We are called to be Exodus communities and persons who wish to have an attitude of dialogue with life and culture, an openness of mind and a capacity for transformation. In an unjust and divided world we need to be signs and witnesses of dialogue and trust, of communion and communal love (#23).”

This year’s World Day of Migrants had as its theme: “The Migrant Family.” The Holy Father, in his message for that day, invites us to reflect on the reality of the Holy Family who also suffered the sacrifices and challenges of migrating to another country and culture in order to avoid persecution. They had to abandon relatives, neighbors, and dear friends, all consequences of being uprooted and

planted in a foreign land. He calls us to be societies which open their arms in hospitality, seeking to construct an integrated community that is “a common home” for all.

As persons wishing to embody the spirituality of the Precious Blood in our lives and commitments, we profess to espouse a spirituality of covenant and hospitality by breaking down the barriers which separate us and by forging communion among peoples. We approach this challenge with a unique perspective. We affirm that part of our mis-

will not detract from the richness of particular gifts, nor will the affirmation of a particular gift conflict with other gifts or with unity itself” (#51).

In a world in which cultural diversities are often the cause for social stress, war and even genocide, we propose, by proclaiming the word and by the witness of our lives, a communion based on mutual respect, love and acceptance, in which differences are seen as an enrichment and not as a cause for division, hatred, and envy.

«We would suggest here to superiors general that they collaborate generously with pastoral workers for migrants and refugees by assigning some of their own members to work in this sector, backed up by the solidarity and collaboration of the entire religious community. Perhaps they might also make available for this work, either permanently or for a certain period, some part of their buildings that would otherwise remain unused.»

*Erga migrantes*, 84

(Instruction of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, May 2004)

sion is to “build community in diversity.” Our own reality as an international congregation puts us in a special vantage point to witness to this communion which lies at the heart of God’s dream for humankind, a dream Jesus sealed in his precious Blood.

Surely, evangelization among such a diversity of cultures is one of the signs of the times which challenge us as we seek to fulfill our mission in the church today. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, Pope John Paul II states: “In an age characterized by the globalization of problems and the return of the idols of nationalism, international Institutes especially are called to uphold and to bear witness to the sense of communion between peoples, races and cultures. In a climate of fraternity, an openness to the global dimension of problems

Our community life, our first apostolate, becomes a prophetic sign for all that “communion in diversity” is possible. We will thus be caught up in that great hymn from Revelation (7:9-17) which exalts the diversity of so many races, peoples, and tongues. Then our C.P.P.S community will become “a parable of communion in diversity” and a sign of hope in our fractured world that such communion in diversity is indeed possible and not merely a utopia.

## IN THIS ISSUE

The articles we present here look at immigration from different perspectives. Our lead article by Fr. Thomas Wunram describes immigration as a sign of the times and he takes a look at how we sometimes tend to exclude strangers in order to safeguard our own turf. In

his provocative reflection, he invites us to view this reality from God's perspective, living lives of compassion and concern for the alien, for "the other" in our midst.

Three articles then describe the ministries of several of our missionaries involved with working with immigrants. From the United States, Fr. William Delaney describes his ministry in St. Agnes Parish with the Mexican and Central American immigrants who come to Los Angeles in search of a better life. Fr. Benedict Magabe, a newly ordained priest in Tanzania, describes the situation he encountered when as a young man he volunteered for work in the refugee camps in Tanzania during the mutual slaughter of Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda. And finally, Fr. Eugenio Mora of the Iberian Province describes how his parish community has responded to the growing problems facing immigrants in Madrid.

We round off this issue with a reflection by Fr. Jerome Stack who

**MERLAP 2007**

**Meeting of Representatives of Lay Associate Programs**

**Rome - Collegio Preziosissimo Sangue  
June 13-22, 2007**

takes a look at how the experience of exile might have influenced St. Gaspar's understanding of Precious Blood spirituality and his ministry.

So, how does all this challenge us as men and women committed to pro-

claiming in word and deed the spirituality of the Blood which speaks of inclusion and that affirms the dignity of each human person? I found apropos a proposal approved unanimously at the regional meeting of the C.P.P.S. in Europe in January, 2004. Having recognized that immigration is one of the most pressing needs and challenges facing society and the Church today in Europe, it was proposed unanimously "To found an international community, in Europe, with its own style of communal living and work to assist in addressing the problems of immigration, to respond to the challenges of multiculturalism [proposed city: Madrid]" (Proposal #12).

As an international congregation this would seem to me an appropriate way to respond to one of the most pressing needs of our times. Wouldn't it be interesting to form a multicultural community drawing from our membership in Latin America, Africa, India, and Central and Western Europe, to witness to "communion in diversity" made possible through the Precious Blood of Christ? Are we willing to



Migrant workers in Bangalore, India, having lunch with their families

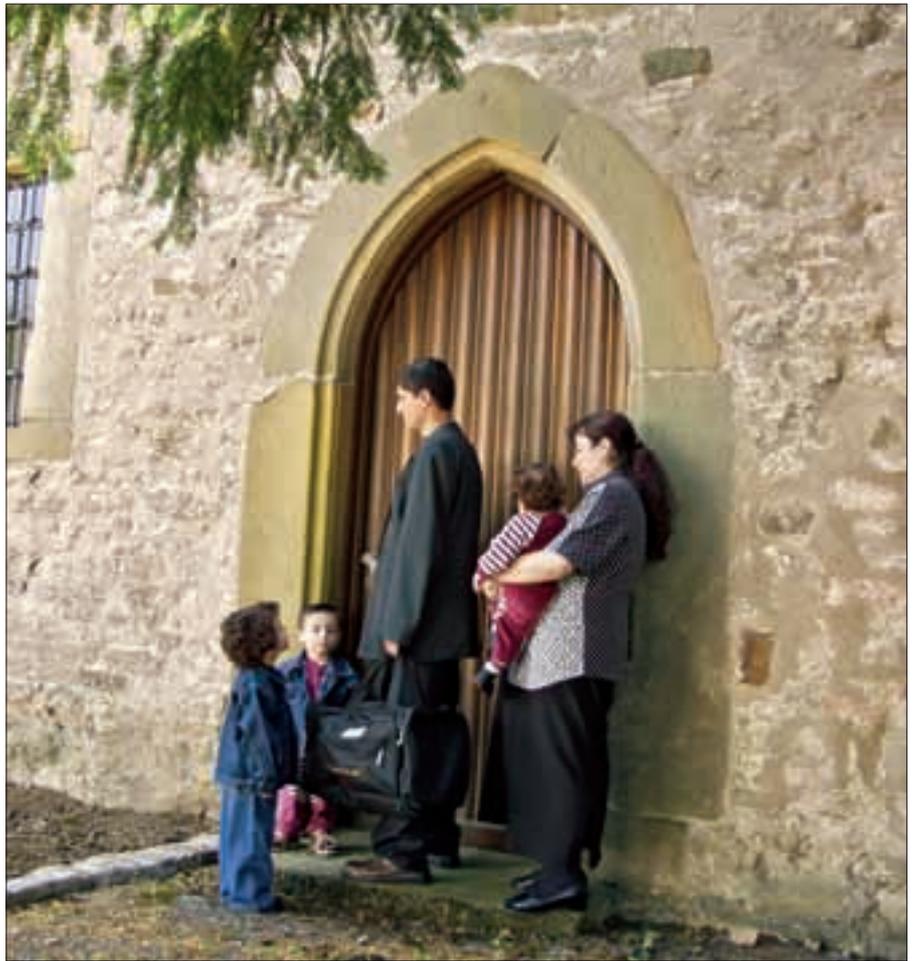
“put out into the deep water” (Luke 5, 4) and to give a new response to the challenges of today in creative fidelity to our founder’s charism?

**A WORD OF THANKS**

With this issue of *The Cup* we close a cycle. This publication first appeared in October, 1996 and since then under two successive administrations twenty-two issues have been published covering a wide range of topics.

I wish to thank all those who have contributed their time and talents to making this publication a success. My special thanks go to the General Curia members who have contributed during these twelve years with the editing and proof-reading of each issue. Thanks also to those who contributed articles on a diversity of themes. Without you, there would be no *Cup*. We are grateful for our translators who made it possible to publish in five different languages. Special thanks are due to our friends at Stilgraf, in Cesena, Italy, who have done such a good job in laying out and printing a very attractive publication.

Responses from the membership from around the world have been



**Will this refugee family find a welcome in the Christian community?**

very positive over the years and it is agreed that *The Cup* has contributed to the awareness and appreciation of our internationality. In July 2007 a new general leadership team will be elected during the General Assembly. It will be up to

that new team to decide the future of *The Cup*. I surely hope that it will continue to be for our C.P.P.S. community and the entire family of the Precious Blood an effective means of communication and of *bonding* in our common heritage. ♦

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